

State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

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February 24, 2014

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Glenn A. Cassis and I am the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The mission of the Commission is to promote and improve the economic, educational, health safety and political well-being of the African-American community in Connecticut. I wish to submit testimony to strengthen **PA12-40**.

Education is one asset that when honestly earned can never be taken away. A solid education will open doors for anyone willing to step through to reach their intellectual and economic potential. The State's constitution affords citizens their right to a public education. With an ever changing world and a global economic society, we as a state and nation need to maximize our intellectual potential to the fullest. In a report by the Lumina Foundation for Education ([A Stronger Nation through Higher Education](#)), in order for the United States to remain competitive in the global economy, we need to increase the percentage of adults with a college degree to 60% by the year 2025. In Connecticut we stand at 46.4% of adults (ages 25-64) with associate degrees or higher¹. To meet this goal, Connecticut must work comprehensively and provide access and strategies for success for traditional college age students and adult learners in the education pipeline.

Although well intended PA12-40 needs to recognize some of the major challenges it presents freshmen college students and returning adults. Based on annual math and English placement data, since 2009 many urban community colleges report that less than 20% of the students admitted tested into college

¹ Page 37 from A Stronger Nation through Higher Education Report - An annual report from the 2013 Lumina Foundation for Education

Our Mission

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

placement and embedded classes. This means that for most institutions more than 80% of new students would be placed in intensive level or transitional strategies courses. Currently the community colleges do not have the necessary resources to accommodate this huge need by the fall of 2014. There is no time for pointing fingers because the clock is ticking. The AAAC strongly urges the Appropriations Committee to allocate the necessary resources to address this need.

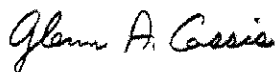
Currently there are fifteen federally funded TRiO programs and ten Educational Opportunity Centers on college and university campuses in Connecticut. Through intensive year around academic and culturally appropriate curricula, these programs have lead thousands of students to academic success. Guided by strict federal guidelines and evaluation these programs have moved previously underprepared first generation and low income students to post-secondary degrees. These students were not given much of a chance to attain a college degree. Many of these students were told that they were not college material. When provided the tools they emerged as successful graduates. Postsecondary degrees are the most important asset for the future productivity of Connecticut. All students can benefit from a college education and it is imperative for that we allocate resources to higher education for the masses instead of feeding the prison pipeline or sustaining the poverty cycle.

There is a strong network of educational programs that if invited to actively collaborate as partners, can yield positive, battle tested results. If properly funded these educational support programs can be the game changer needed to yield strong, positive results. These programs have used resources efficiently and effectively. They understand the strategies required to implement the curricula developed by faculty. Programs like federally funded GEAR-UP have done great work in preparing middle school and high school students in New Haven and Waterbury for the rigors of postsecondary education. These models are successful and are available to us to collaborate.

I am believe that when you hear from representatives of these programs your confidence will grow knowing that there are dedicated managers and administrators available to assist and provide leadership. We must move quickly and responsibly to meet the challenges that PA12-40 presents. The AAAC looks forward to supporting the Legislature and the students and returning adults of Connecticut who are underserved.

Thank you for your time.

Submitted by,



Glenn A. Cassis
Executive Director